

# PRESENTENSE

APRIL 2004



**CIVIL AIR PATROL**  
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

the newsletter for CAP public affairs officers

## INSIDE

### PROMOTE CAP THROUGH YOUR PROFESSIONAL CONTACTS

Does your profession have its own newsletter or magazine? Networking meetings? Outreach programs? Tell your colleagues how you balance your career with volunteer work in CAP. See how physical therapist and CAP member Heleno Souza did it with an article in *National Physical Therapist* magazine. **Page 2**

### THIS MONTH'S CASE STUDY

#### *The fine art of editing*

In journalism, brevity counts! Forget everything you learned about writing for your high school English teacher, your college professors and your boss. This tutorial shows you how to polish your prose 'til it shines! **Pages 3-4**

### OOPS!

The March 2004 edition of *Presentense* suggested a useful Web site at [www.newslink.com](http://www.newslink.com). Thanks to Group 9 Illinois Wing PAO 2 Lt. Lee Davis for pointing out that the correct address is actually [www.newslink.ORG](http://www.newslink.ORG)!

### PLUS

- ✓ **How to find the latest Fact Sheet**
- ✓ **New CAP membership stats**
- ✓ **Cool Web sites for PAOs**  
*Check out the Poynter Institute's everything-journalism Web site*
- ✓ **CAP in the News**  
*New article in Search and Rescue magazine*

*Presentense* is the official monthly publication for public affairs officers of the Civil Air Patrol, and is produced by Melanie LeMay in the Strategic Communications and Planning Directorate, CAP National Headquarters, Maxwell AFB, Ala. All copy is written by Melanie LeMay unless otherwise noted.

Is there something you'd like us to cover in *Presentense*? Contact Melanie LeMay at [mlemay@cap.gov](mailto:mlemay@cap.gov) or call her at (334) 953-5320.



Photo by Marc Huchette, CAP National Headquarters

**Former Tuskegee Airman Maj. Carrol Woods**, right, goes through fingerprinting in applying for CAP membership at CAP National Headquarters. Lt. Col. Al Jackson, who once served the Alabama Wing as a PAO, encouraged Woods, who lives in Alabama, to join CAP and help with recruiting and retention. Jackson also recognized that Woods' joining CAP was newsworthy, and helped provide the necessary information for a national media release when Woods joined CAP in March 2004.

## Harness your local star power

Almost every community has residents with some claim to fame. Whether they be former military greats, high school athletes who went on to glory, published authors or successful business men and women, these people are interesting to the public.

You can capitalize on their good public images by including these people in your unit's marketing plan. Help such people find something in CAP's work to feel good about promoting. Maybe your unit is strong in search and rescue or disaster relief. Maybe your members work with local schools in aerospace education. Maybe your cadets are reliable fixtures in crowd control at city-

wide events.

Whatever your unit's strengths, there's probably a public figure in your area who would donate his or her time to speak up about your unit's good work. Here are some ideas:

✦ **A former military hero**, especially if he/she was in aviation. There are former Tuskegee Airmen and retired Air Force heroes throughout the country. You might also consider former POWs as a resource, as well as any cadets who have gone on to serve in the armed forces, especially if they're highly visible – like astronauts or government officials. Such people can speak to

**See Star, page 2**

## Published professional

Physical therapy is the "other" job for a busy PAO in the SCWG Spartanburg Composite Squadron, 1 Lt. Heleno Souza. With his experience and contacts in the field, Souza was recently able to place an article about CAP in *National Physical Therapist* magazine, with a circulation of 1.5 million across the United States and a number of foreign countries.

In the article, called "How One PT Serves His Country in the Air Force Civil Air Patrol," Souza tells how much it means to him, as a native of Brazil, to serve the United States,

where he has chosen to make his home and establish his physical therapy practice, BMS Rehab.

In his article, Souza talks about CAP's history and present-day missions. He discusses how he balances his PT practice with his volunteer work in CAP and how both allow him to give something back to his adopted community.

Souza was able to place the story because he'd developed a relationship with the magazine's editor over the years, understood the magazine's audience, and followed writers' guidelines.



Photos courtesy of Heleno Souza



Heleno Souza divides his time between a busy physical therapy practice and volunteer work with a CAP squadron in South Carolina.

## CAP in the News

*Search and Rescue* magazine, a publication of NASAR (the National Association of Search and Rescue), carried a six-page article on CAP in its December 2003 issue. The magazine even featured a CAP plane on the cover!

### Star, from page 1

the value of learning military customs and courtesies as well as leadership training.

✦ College or professional athletes can be good role models. If they were once CAP cadets, so much the better. Regardless, they can speak to the importance of the cadet program's emphasis on physical training and teamwork.

✦ A successful business person in your community, especially one who was once in CAP, can discuss ways his or her CAP training helped him in the business world. Even without prior involvement in CAP, such a person can speak to the value of discipline, courtesy, project management, academic achievement, a drug-free lifestyle, and teamwork.

✦ A prominent local political figure or a state senator who hails from your community can be a great friend to your unit. He or she will want the support of your members, and you can benefit from having someone in a high political position with the influence to help your unit reach its goals.

If you identify a star who believes in CAP,

these are ways you can put him or her to work to promote your unit and CAP as a whole.

- ✓ Record him on tape and video for a local public service announcement.
- ✓ Ask him to appear with you for a presentation at a prominent local civic organization. Give a brief explanation about CAP (you could use the nationally-produced CAPabilities video) and then introduce him to talk about why such a program is so valuable to the community. Be sure the local media is there to record his comments!
- ✓ Invite your star (and the media, of course!) for an orientation flight in one of your CAP aircraft. Demonstrate the process you use for search and rescue or some other type of mission. Make sure your star comments on the record about the value of such capabilities to your community.
- ✓ Invite your star to talk to your cadets, and be sure the media (or another photographer/videographer) captures those

moments on film. Positive comments about CAP from a role model can have a powerful impact on your recruiting and retention program.

✓ Ask your star if you can use his or her comments and photo in your unit's future promotional material.

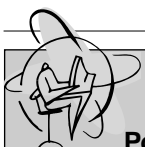
✓ Ask your star if he or she has business contacts who might be interested in supporting CAP financially.

✓ If your star is a performer, perhaps he would agree to an appearance for which part of the proceeds would go to your unit.

✓ Best case: See if you can sign up your star as a member of CAP. Even if he's not interested in mission work, he can make a major contribution to your public affairs and recruiting programs.

If you do succeed in establishing a relationship with a local star, be sure to let him or her know how much you appreciate his supporting CAP.

Finally, never take such support for granted. Remember, public people have many demands on their time and energies.



### Web sites for PAOs

**Poynter Institute Online** – The Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg, Fla. sponsors a great Web site for journalists at [www.poynter.org](http://www.poynter.org). The Poynter Institute is a renowned school for journalists and journalism teachers. It focuses on the best practices in journalism content, ethics and design. Its Web site is a fascinating compendium of opinion, research and facts related to today's journalism community. You can see examples of good writing, design and photography, as well as regular columns on such topics as e-media and journalism trends. From the home page, you can search the Poynter site or 221 other journalism-related sites for specific topics and can sign up for a regular newsletter delivered right to your home e-mailbox.

### CAP MEMBERSHIP

as of Feb. 29, 2004

Cadets 26,507

Seniors 35,388

TOTAL 61,895

**Need an updated national CAP Fact Sheet?** Look under *Tools for PAOs* in the member section of [www.cap.gov](http://www.cap.gov).

## Public Affairs Case Study 7

## POLISH YOUR PROSE 'TIL IT SHINES - THE FINE ART OF EDITING

Editing is more than just looking for misspelled words and grammatical errors. It's the critical second half of the writing process that separates the amateurs from the pros. All successful writers know that even when the first draft is complete, they're far from finished with their work. It's rare that a first draft is so perfect that it can't profit from careful editing. This tutorial will show you how to correct some common writing mistakes, how to tighten your prose and write like a journalist, and how to look at your own work objectively.

There is no one "right" writing style, but there are definitely styles that seem to win you points in certain settings.

## ◆ Academic style

If you're one of those people who figured out the writing game in college, then you've probably mastered this style. The basic rule is never to use three words when ten will do, and to load each sentence with lots of words that connote high levels of education. **Example: The configuration of these symbolic figures on a standard duo-tone field of play is irrelevant to the difficulty of experiential strategizing and the eventual outcome.** (*Translation: Don't think the position of your chess pieces makes it any easier to score a checkmate.*)

## ◆ Military style

Military style is similar to academic style, except that it's heavy on acronyms and violates some conventional punctuation rules. **Example: It is expected that all personnel will report in an expedient manner to the EYCON dining facility no later than 1800 hours, with the exception of auxiliary personnel, who should be prepared to report only upon specific notification of the commanding officers for their respective units, unless orders are issued to the contrary.** (*Translation: Arrive at the dining hall no later than 6 p.m. unless your commander tells you otherwise.*)

## ◆ Business style

Business style relies on popular technical-sounding jargon, often coined by news, political or media figures and then adopted ad nauseum by business people across the nation. Scott Adams spoofs this style unmercifully in his Dilbert comics. **Example: Our mission involves a multi-dimensional paradigm through which our strategic goals can be implemented and partnerships can be established through mutually beneficial and cost-effective agreements.** (*Translation: We want to meet all our goals, preferably by working cooperatively with others at no cost to us.*)

**REMEMBER! Good writing is clear writing. Period. You don't get points for using three-dollar words, stacking prepositional phrases, or using five words when two will do. This is especially true in journalism. The best writers say the most with the fewest words.**

Unfortunately, many of our schools and workplaces encourage stilted, pedantic writing, and that's a hard style to overcome once it becomes ingrained. To attack the problem, let's look at some commonly used stilted phrases and some alternatives to them.

**Instead of...**

utilize  
multiple  
office facility  
personnel  
strategic plan  
written document  
discourse  
elementary  
at this point  
at this time  
cost-effective  
ineffectual  
paradigm  
outcome  
educational institution  
at all times  
in connection with  
not allow

**Try...**

use  
several, (or use the actual number)  
office  
members, staff  
plan  
document  
discussion, talk  
basic  
now  
now  
low-cost, inexpensive, cheap  
ineffective, useless  
concept  
result  
school, college, university  
always  
with  
prevent, preclude

**Instead of...**

for the purpose of  
due to the fact that  
in the near future  
with regard to  
in view of the fact that  
mutual agreement  
future prospects  
consensus of opinion  
whether or not  
inadvertent error  
with the exception of  
anticipate  
commence  
upon  
within  
will have to  
look into  
in order to

**Try...**

to  
because  
soon  
about  
because  
agreement  
prospects  
consensus  
whether  
error, mistake  
except  
expect  
begin  
on  
in  
must  
consider  
to

## Public Affairs Case Study 7 (CONTINUED)

**POLISH YOUR PROSE 'TIL IT SHINES - THE FINE ART OF EDITING****Six tips to help you edit like a pro**

Here's one way to use this tutorial in a classroom setting. Divide the group into teams of 2 or 3 people. Give the teams an idea for a press release or news article. Ask each team to take that idea through each of the six steps below. When they're finished, ask them to read their results. Which team did the best job of writing *and* editing?

**1. Define your message.**

Don't just start writing. Stop. Think about what you really want to say. Say it out loud, as if you were explaining it to an intelligent ten-year-old. Now write down what you just said.

**2. Cut out all unnecessary words. Now go through and cut out more.**

Think what you wrote is pretty good? It's not! Go through and look at every word. Cut out every single word that isn't critical to your meaning. When you're finished, go back and do it again.

**3. Do your best to cast every sentence in active voice.**

**Passive voice is the enemy of good writing.**

*PASSIVE:* The award was presented to Cadet Joel Pierson by Joseph Herman of the Abington Civitan Club.

*ACTIVE:* Joseph Herman of the Abington Civitan Club presented the award to Cadet Joel Pierson.

**Lazy writers like passive voice because it hides their failure to get all the facts.**

The award was presented to Cadet Joel Pierson. (*By whom? Of what organization?*)

The plane was found in a wooded area. (*Who found it?*)

The cadet was told to leave the premises. (*Who told her to leave?*)

**4. Let someone else read your work and then state in his/her own words what he just read.**

Did your reader come away with what you intended to say? If not, where did he stray? It's not your reader's job to figure out what you meant to say. It's your job to communicate so clearly that your reader can't possibly misunderstand your message.

**5. Guard against jargon.**

Especially when you're writing for public consumption, get rid of the military/business/academic jargon. Write dates like the general public does (March 22, 2004 – not 22 March 2004). Put periods after rank abbreviations in your text in accordance with AP style. Don't litter your copy with acronyms. We in CAP know

what PAO, SAR, and DDR mean – the general public doesn't.

**6. Never fall in love with your own words.**

It's painful to edit the fruits of your prolific pen, but you must be brave and cut out the chaff with a machete! After all, your goal isn't to win the Pulitzer Prize. Your goal is to write something that other people will read.

**Here are some examples of writing rehabilitated with good editing:**

*WEAK:* We want to inform you of an impending change that will take place in the Abington Composite Squadron. It has been determined that the name of the squadron will be changed to Andrew F. Conig Composite Squadron to honor the man who first founded the squadron in 1967.

*BETTER:* To honor its 1967 founder, CAP's Abington Composite Squadron is changing its name to Andrew F. Conig Composite Squadron.

*WEAK:* The aircraft was located by a CAP air crew on the peak of the mountain near Deatsville, Ky., with three surviving passengers onboard. The surviving passengers were transported by a CAP ground crew to an ambulance which was waiting on the side of the road on I-75. Paramedics worked on the victims, and then the decision was made to fly them by law enforcement helicopter to a hospital in nearby Grand Junction.

*BETTER:* A CAP aircrew located the aircraft on a mountain peak near Deatsville, Ky. A CAP ground crew transported all three passengers from the crash site to an ambulance waiting nearby on Interstate 75. After paramedics assessed the victims, local police flew the three victims by helicopter to Graves Memorial Hospital in Grand Junction.

**Some good books on editing:**

⇒ *Getting the Words Right: How to Revise, Edit and Rewrite*, by Theodore A. Rees Cheney

⇒ *Line by Line: How to Edit Your Own Writing*, by Claire Kehrwald Cook

⇒ *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk Jr. et al

⇒ *AP Guide to News Writing*, by Jack Cappon

⇒ *On Writing Well*, by William K. Zinsser